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AG Rosenblum Announces \$4 Million Settlement with CenturyLink

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Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum today **announced a \$4 million settlement** (https://www.doj.state.or.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CenturyLink_-_AVC_19CV56401.pdf), with the global telecommunications company CenturyLink for engaging in deceptive advertising by door-to-door salespeople, deceptive billing practices, undisclosed fees, and failing to apply promised discounts to customer accounts. Since 2014, Oregon DOJ has received more than 1,200 consumer complaints about CenturyLink.

As part of the settlement, CenturyLink also will refund \$672,000 to 8,212 Oregonians who were overcharged for their services, or did not receive the promised discount. The impacted Oregon consumers will be contracted by CenturyLink directly, but any consumers with questions can contact the Oregon Attorney General's Consumer hotline at 877-877-9392.

"Purchasing internet, phone service and cable is confusing enough without false promises, and confusing prices and fees. Today's settlement sends a clear message that hidden fees and other forms of unfair and deceptive business practices will not be tolerated in Oregon," said Attorney General Rosenblum.

Specifically, Oregon consumers complained that CenturyLink charged more than the promised price, or they received multiple bills each month for different amounts, were billed for services after they had cancelled the service, or were billed for modems before they were installed. Consumers also complained about the quality of service, Internet speed that was much slower than what was promised, or Internet service so slow that it was unusable.

Under the settlement, which was filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court, CenturyLink must:

- Stop charging new customers the "Internet Cost Recovery Fee", a fee that was not always previously disclosed to consumers until they received their first bill.
- Stop charging a "Broadband Cost Recovery Fee".
- Allow current customers to have an opportunity to transition to another plan without the fee.
- Clearly disclose all mandatory fees and charges in future advertisements.
- Stop charging cancellation and unreturned equipment fees if they are not disclosed at the time of sale.

In February 2014, Oregon DOJ opened an investigation of CenturyLink in response to over 1,000 consumer complaints, including complaints about the company misrepresenting the price of services, failing to inform consumers of terms and conditions that could affect the price, and billing consumers for services they never received. In 2018, complaints about telecommunication services topped Oregon DOJ's top 10 consumer complaints.

Oregon DOJ will continue to lead a separate securities class action lawsuit arising from the same conduct.

Attorney General Rosenblum asks any Oregonian who believe they have received bills that include undisclosed fees **to file a consumer complaint** (<https://www.doj.state.or.us/consumer-protection/sales-scams-fraud/report-scams-fraud/>), or contact the Attorney General Consumer Hotline.

The Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) is led by Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, and serves as the state's law firm. The Oregon DOJ advocates for and protects all Oregonians, especially the most vulnerable, such as children and seniors.